

CHANGING THE EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM IN AN ERA OF PERSISTENT CONFLICT

BY

MR. DAVID S. HENDERSON
Department of Army Civilian

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USAWC CLASS OF 2009

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U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				<i>Form Approved</i> OMB No. 0704-0188	
<small>Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.</small>					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 01-05-2009		2. REPORT TYPE Program Research Paper		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Changing the Educational Paradigm in an Era of Persistent Conflict				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Mr. David S. Henderson				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Dr. Kevin Reynolds Department of Distance Education				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT DISTRIBUTION A: Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Units trained in branch core competencies contribute to the overall ability of a Brigade Combat Team to achieve its missions. However, the conflict in Iraq has caused some units to be re-missioned to tasks not related to their core competencies. These units, most notably Field Artillery units, are now experiencing an atrophy of core skills. This atrophy, combined with a high operational tempo and repetitive non-standard mission deployments, is creating a generation of Leaders and Soldiers incapable of performing fundamental branch core functions and units that cannot retrain themselves to conduct combat operations as intended. Army training doctrine identifies a requirement to develop adaptable leaders: capable of mastery in core warfighting skills but also able to apply critical and adaptable skills in counterinsurgency operations. These leaders are not developed by restricting time in educational institutions or relying on distributed learning methods: methods that are currently used to keep Leaders with units given the operational tempo. This practice yields a force that is incapable of core skill mastery or adaptive thinking. A new paradigm is needed to meet this educational and operational paradox.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS TRADOC, Core competencies, educational paradigm, adaptable Leaders, skills atrophy					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)
UNCLASSIFIED	UNCLASSIFIED	UNCLASSIFIED	UNLIMITED	28	

USAWC PROGRAM RESEARCH PROJECT

**CHANGING THE EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM IN AN ERA OF PERSISTENT
CONFLICT**

by

Mr. David S. Henderson
Department of Army Civilian

Dr. Kevin Reynolds
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Mr. David S. Henderson

TITLE: Changing the Educational Paradigm in an Era of Persistent Conflict

FORMAT: Program Research Project

DATE: 1 May 2009 WORD COUNT: 5,373 PAGES: 28

KEY TERMS: TRADOC, Core competencies, educational paradigm, adaptable Leaders, skills atrophy

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Units trained in branch core competencies contribute to the overall ability of a Brigade Combat Team to achieve its missions. However, the conflict in Iraq has caused some units to be re-missioned to tasks not related to their core competencies. These units, most notably Field Artillery units, are now experiencing an atrophy of core skills. This atrophy, combined with a high operational tempo and repetitive non-standard mission deployments, is creating a generation of Leaders and Soldiers incapable of performing fundamental branch core functions and units that cannot retrain themselves to conduct combat operations as intended. Army training doctrine identifies a requirement to develop adaptable leaders: capable of mastery in core warfighting skills but also able to apply critical and adaptable skills in counterinsurgency operations. These leaders are not developed by restricting time in educational institutions or relying on distributed learning methods: methods that are currently used to keep Leaders with units given the operational tempo. This practice yields a force that is incapable of core skill mastery or adaptive thinking. A new paradigm is needed to meet this educational and operational paradox.

CHANGING THE EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM IN AN ERA OF PERSISTENT CONFLICT

Core competencies are Army branch unique capabilities that contribute to a combat team's ability to accomplish assigned missions. In order for a combat team to possess all of its warfighting capabilities, personnel and units must be trained and equipped to meet the needs of any type of conflict the team may encounter. While Phase One of Operation Iraqi Freedom is considered to be high intensity combat, operations since the liberation of Baghdad shifted to counter insurgency tasks. These operations caused units of some of the Army branches to be re-missioned to tasks that are not part of their branch core competency task set: counter insurgency operations not requiring the unique combat multiplier capabilities of those branches. Field Artillery, used in this paper as an extreme example, now suffers from a generation of Soldiers, Leaders, and units that have not performed fundamental core tasks for a significant number of years and are incapable of retraining themselves in those tasks. Officers and mid- to senior grade Noncommissioned Officers do not know how to perform branch essential tasks. As the Army trains, educates, and prepares for the current fight, it cannot lose sight of the need to train its Soldiers and Leaders to be able to fight across the full spectrum of conflict. The Army must achieve a balance in its training and education that builds competencies in core branch skills as well as preparing Soldiers and Leaders for the current and future conflicts: a task the new TRADOC Commander is vigorously addressing. How does the Army achieve this balance?

Correction starts with a fundamental change in the Army's training and education paradigm. This change begins in the institutions where the training and education of the

individual Soldier and Leader occur and continues with both unit and individual responsibilities for continued education and development. While this sounds in line with the existing training construct outlined in Army training manuals, foundational modifications in the Army's educational philosophy are required to make the changes proposed in this paper effective.

The U.S. military trains to fight and win America's wars. Historically this focused on wars/conflicts between nation states and was focused on General War, or high intensity conflict. Conflicts that did not fit into this mold were considered to be of lesser importance. Training may have been adjusted to prepare Soldiers for such conflict but as soon as the conflict was over, training again became focused on high end combat. Vietnam is an excellent example of this methodology. The Nation's primary threat was the Soviet Union and defense policy focused on defeating Soviet capabilities.¹ Training was centered on mounted maneuver warfare and the synchronization of the combined arms team to defeat a similarly equipped force. In terms of preparing the force for "Operations Other than War", the prevailing philosophy was that Soldiers and Leaders trained in high intensity combat could also operate in conflicts of "lesser" intensity.² This focus toward high end combat required each branch of the Army to train its Soldiers and Leaders in the unique branch tasks needed to support the maneuver commander. Field Artillery soldiers and leaders learned the fundamentals and advanced tactics of providing and integrating massed cannon, rocket, and missile fires and integrating airpower to meet maneuver commander priorities.

The institutional training base matched its efforts with those of the Army at large. From the end of the Vietnam conflict through Operation Iraqi Freedom 1, the training

institutions produced Soldiers and Leaders trained and educated in high end, force-on-force tasks and procedures. These institutions relied on resident courses to train and educate and the personnel system returned Noncommissioned Officers and Officers to the institution regularly for refresher training in branch core competency tasks and education in leadership skills for present and future career opportunities. Resident functional courses, training in very narrowly focused areas, were also available as a resource for meeting a unit's more specialized requirements.

The institutions were not the only means to train and educate Soldiers and Leaders. Units and individuals also had responsibilities. The training paradigm was that the institution trained the Soldier or Leader in core tasks to the point of knowledge and task proficiency, the unit reinforced the training, honing the Soldier's or Leader's skills to the mastery level³, and the Soldier/Leader was responsible for continuing his/her education through self study. These three – Institutional, Operational, and Self-Development – represent the three pillars of the educational structure outlined in FM 7-0.⁴ Unit commanders prepared their units to meet their operational requirements using a variety of methods. The Combat Training Centers became the primary locations for conducting collective training of Brigade and battalion level formations after preliminary work was done at home station. Home Station training began with individual qualifications and progressed up through battalion certification. Individuals were also responsible for their education. FM 7.0 states: "Individuals were responsible for their own professional growth and for seeking out self- development opportunities."⁵ Correspondence courses and advanced civilian education opportunities were available for individuals to pursue.

Operation Iraqi Freedom exposed a failure in the training philosophy geared solely toward major combat operations. This failure was evidenced when high intensity conflict terminated and US forces transitioned to stability operations; assuming roles practically overnight as town mayors, police chiefs, wardens, public works superintendents, and such where the acts of individual Soldiers had strategic implications. Units and individuals had not been taught the skills required to operate in stability and counterinsurgency operations. Much time and tactical momentum were lost while units struggled with this transition. Commanders, Leaders, and Soldiers had to adapt quickly to the new tactical circumstances. As a result of these lessons, training institutions were required to add necessary course materials to conduct training in the tasks and skills needed in this new operating environment. Simultaneously, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) gave guidance preventing increases in course lengths even as requirements to cover new topics increased. Institutions now were training branch core competency tasks and new stability tasks in the same amount of time previously needed to train just core competency skills.

Other factors began impacting training. Rapid rotations of units into the operational area, force structure changes caused by modularity, the Army Force Generation Model (ARFORGEN), and the change in mission from high-end conflict to counter insurgency caused some units (most notably Field Artillery (FA) units) to change missions and stop performing their traditional roles. Instead of providing fire support, many Field Artillery units found their major weapon systems silenced and personnel tasked to perform missions not aligned with their core capabilities. Some artillery units were re-missioned to become transportation units; some performed MP

tasks. Soldiers and Leaders of other units were retrained to be radar operators.

Artillery battalions did not deploy as battalions; instead, batteries were sent into theater as subordinate units of different headquarters. Artillery battalions, now organic to the modular Brigade Combat Team, became maneuver units: performing as infantry battalions. Rapid and repeated deployments prevented these units from regaining FA core competencies while at home station before executing subsequent non-standard missions.

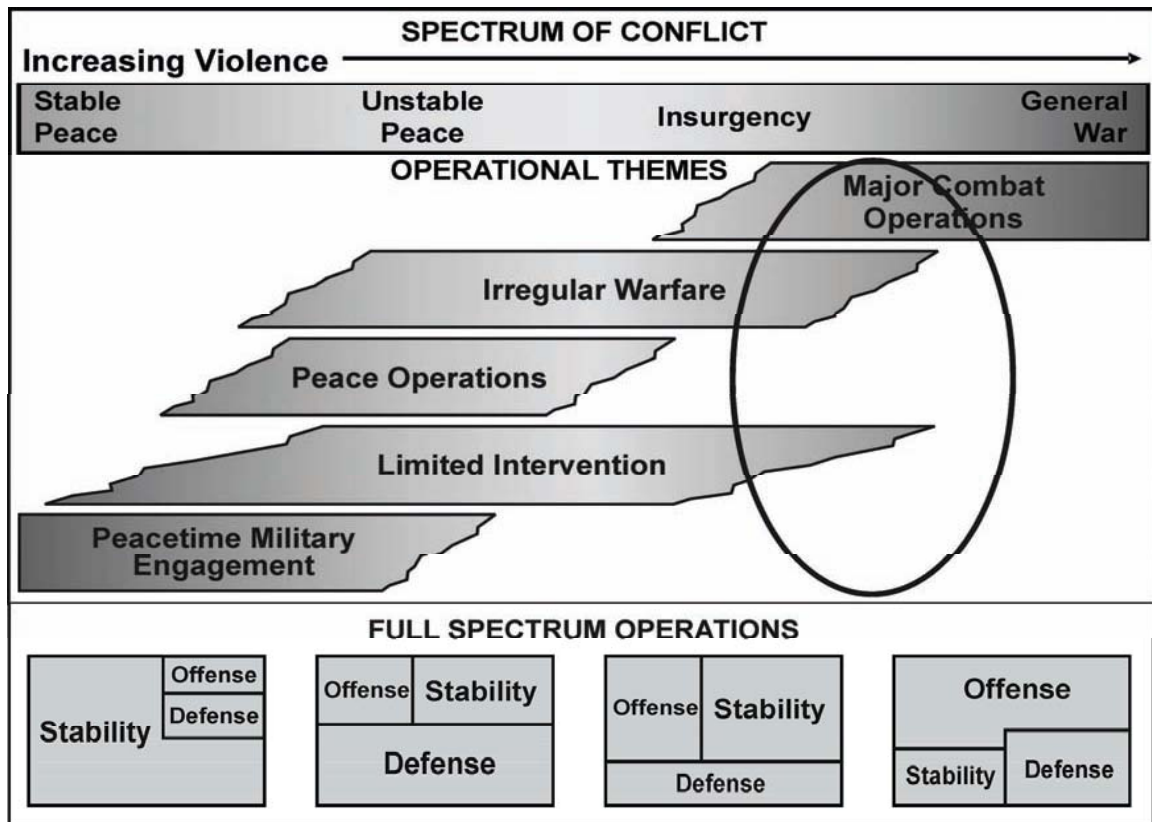
The consequence of these repetitive non-standard missions is a generation of Artillery leaders who do not know their branch core tasks and battalions that have lost the ability to operate as coherent Field Artillery units. Many Officers, Noncommissioned Officers, and Soldiers have not conducted Artillery live-fire in years. Worse, these units have lost the ability to retrain themselves in fundamental Field Artillery skills as they return from deployments. Lost skills include basic fire direction calculations, artillery weapon maintenance and operation, small unit tactics, and command and control of an artillery unit conducting missions supporting the maneuver commander.⁶

Not every FA unit has this issue. While Field Artillery units may not be firing their howitzers in Iraq, Afghanistan is a different environment requiring Field Artillery leaders to be innovative in their delivery of supporting fires. Brigade Combat Teams are spread over areas exceeding doctrinal distances. Artillery units operate in a distributed, decentralized manner supporting maneuver operations. Single- and two-gun platoons operating at a distance from battalion and battery headquarters support ground operations. Battalion and battery commanders must be innovative in their training efforts

to meet operational requirements.⁷ Regrettably, the majority of artillery units deploy to Iraq.

While the impact counterinsurgency operations are having on Field Artillery units may be an extreme example, it may serve as a microcosm of the impact current operations are having on the force at large. Many branches are executing missions and tasks that lie within their branch core competency and some may feel that they can perform their core tasks better than before.⁸ What is apparent is that the philosophy of training for high intensity conflict alone is no longer adequate. What is also apparent is that the Cold War model of relying heavily on resident institutional training is inadequate to meet the training needs of a force at a high operational tempo.

Some argue that high end conflict is not the conflict of the future. Without a 'near peer' competitor and the proven ability of US forces in high end conflict, enemies will seek to fight in environments that negate or limit US firepower capabilities.⁹ In an attempt to find a training focus, FM 7-0 proposes that training should be focused on a place between "Insurgency" operations and "General War" as shown in Figure 1 below.



FM 7.0 postulates that “Army units must have the capability to train on stability tasks, such as “Providing essential services” and “Support to economic and infrastructure development,” while sustaining proficiency in offensive and defensive operations” ¹¹ [i.e. General War operations]. The manual continues: “Operations require well-trained leaders, Soldiers, and units who are not only proficient in core Warfighting competencies but also mentally agile and able to adapt those competencies across the spectrum of conflict.”¹² FM 3-0 “Operations,” the Army’s capstone document for how the Army plans to fight, defines “full spectrum operations as “Army forces combin[ing] offensive, defensive, and stability or civil support operations simultaneously as part of an interdependent joint force . . . “¹³ The manual continues: “Full spectrum operations require continuous, simultaneous combinations of offensive, defensive, and stability or

civil support tasks.”¹⁴ Expanding on this idea, Frank Hoffman, writing for the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies in a monograph entitled “Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars,” states: “It is not that conventional or interstate conflict is on the decline, there is a fusion of war forms emerging, one that blurs regular and irregular warfare,”¹⁵ something that Israeli forces experienced in Lebanon - which will be discussed later. He continues, “Instead of separate challengers with fundamentally different approaches (conventional, irregular, or terrorist), we can expect to face competitors who will employ all forms of war and tactics, perhaps simultaneously.”¹⁶ Hoffman calls conflicts such as these “hybrid wars”.¹⁷

Given this guidance, how should Army institutions prepare the force to face present day and future challenges on the battlefield? A glimpse can be found in the 2008 Joint Operating Environment document issued from Joint Forces Command.

The requirement to prepare to meet a wide range of threats is going to prove particularly difficult for American forces in the period between now and the 2030s. The difficulties involved in training to meet regular and nuclear threats must not push preparations to fight irregular war into the background, as occurred in the decades after the Vietnam War.¹⁸

This document further asserts, looking at the educational requirements for leaders in the next 25 years:

While the preparation of these young officers and NCO's must begin with their training as military professionals, it must also include their intellectual education to confront the challenges of war, change, and differing cultures. In the space of twenty-five years, they must master the extraordinarily difficult tasks of their military specialties as well as those required by joint warfare. But equally important, they must prepare themselves for the challenges presented by war and the projection of military force.¹⁹

Mental agility and adaptability are becoming key attributes of the future leaders of the military. The document concludes: “. . . agility is the product of rigorous education,

appropriate applications of technology and a rich understanding of the social and political context in which military operations are conducted.”²⁰ The opportunity to expand the learning of Army leaders is an imperative to achieve the skills sets and abilities to be adaptable, able to meet the challenges posed by counterinsurgency, full war, and any combination of conflict types that may occur in the future. David Gompert states: “Any force prepared to address hybrid threats would have to be built upon a solid professional military foundation, but would also place a premium on the cognitive skills to recognize or quickly adapt to the unknown.”²¹ To be able to lead in this environment a leader must be grounded in fundamental tasks that can then be adapted to the conditions faced on the battlefield.²² Cognitive skills come from experience and from professional education opportunities that provide scenarios putting the student in varying conditions and from immediate feedback from instructors on the results of the student’s efforts. ²³

FM 7-0’s focus of training located between “Insurgency” and “General War,” combined with current restrictions on institutional course lengths, implies that not all tasks for Insurgency and “General War” operations (i.e. branch core competencies) would be trained. Individuals and units must have foundational knowledge and experience in both areas in order to operate in a hybrid environment. Israeli failures during the 2006 Lebanon conflict should serve as examples for U.S. forces when considering training strategies both in the institution and in operational units. Since 1973, Israeli forces had been focused on urban counter-insurgency operations conducted at the company level. Collective training for high-end conflict essentially stopped, as did training at battalion and brigade level.²⁴ When ordered to attack

Hezbollah positions Israeli ground forces were unprepared to shift from counter-insurgency operations to general war (offensive combined arms) operations.²⁵ “Infantry, artillery, and armor coordination, once the focal point of Israeli doctrine, was significantly degraded.”²⁶ This lesson learned reinforces FM 7-0 statements that Soldiers, Leaders, and units must be fully trained in all aspects of the operational environment that they are expected to operate.

We must now ask the question again. How should Army institutions in general, and individual branch proponents in particular, help prepare the force to face present day and future challenges on the battlefield: particularly with a view toward rebuilding branch core competencies that have atrophied? A methodology is to look at the three pillars of the three training domains described in FM 7-0 – Operational, Institutional, and Self-Development.

Operational

Field Artillery units focus training on the next mission they will execute, but are constrained in their ability to conduct core competency refresher training. This is driven by the Army Force Generation Model and requirements to meet the next deployment. Unit commanders are reluctant to send Soldiers and Leaders just returned from an extended deployment to temporary duty resident courses because it removes the Soldier from his/her family and from the unit and imposes a TDY cost burden on the unit. Repeated deployments performing non-Field Artillery missions have eroded unit capabilities to retrain in fundamental Field Artillery tasks. A generation of officers and NCOs are now in key leadership positions in these units that have not fired artillery weapons in five years.²⁷ A review of training needs identified by battalion commanders

determined that individual and section/platoon level knowledge at key nodes are keys to re-establishing core capabilities.²⁸ For artillery battalions, these key nodes are the delivery system (howitzer or launcher), the fire direction center, and the platoon or battery leadership. Emerging areas that need help are Joint Fires Observer sustainment training and recertification and training of Fires Cell personnel in the synchronization and integration of lethal and non-lethal fires (i.e. Electronic Attack and Information Engagement) with the maneuver commander's scheme of maneuver. Because commanders no longer have the expertise available within the unit to reestablish core competencies they are looking to the institution for help.

These circumstances caused the Field Artillery School to develop Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) to take core competency training to units. With funding help from TRADOC, the Field Artillery School developed two mobile training teams designed to help unit commanders train their units in two core competency areas. The first is focused at the section level – reestablishing core competencies in the fundamental tasks associated with weapon system operation and employment, determination of firing data, and weapon system maintenance. The second is aimed at battalion and higher level staff sections.²⁹ Also available to the unit commander is a team from the Field Artillery School Noncommissioned Officers Academy (other branch schools offer a similar MTT) that conducts a two week version of the Basic Noncommissioned Officers Course (BNCOC) for targeted Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs)³⁰. These courses help the commander achieve his training goals without losing personnel for extended periods of time. Because of these advantages, the MTTs are in high demand by redeploying Field Artillery units.³¹

While MTTs have their utility, they have three weaknesses. First, MTT teams are limited in scope and duration to keep costs to the government and impact on the receiving unit manageable. This limitation in time and scope may prevent the student from getting a full presentation of all the tasks he/she needs or a full comprehension of how the task learned fits into unit operations or its relation to other tasks. BNCOC MTTs are used as a replacement for longer, more comprehensive resident courses. This limits what the NCO learns and places an added responsibility on the NCO to make up what was not trained through self study. Second, daily unit priorities may prevent the right audience from participating in the training or prevent students from attending the training at all. In this case, both the unit and the Army suffer a less than optimal result. Third, MTTs are expensive to field and operate, both in terms of manpower and in travel funding. In recent years, funds were available to support these teams, but there is no guarantee that these funds will continue. Another solution should be explored.

Self-Development

Individual responsibility for self-development has been largely ignored by the Army, which is relying more on the planned opportunities offered by institutional training to meet educational 'gates' in officers' and NCO's career progression. Some individuals have pursued continued learning, taking Correspondence Courses for promotion points, or pursuing college degrees for personal satisfaction and gain. The Army as a culture, however, has not enabled or enforced this aspect of education through the years.³² If self-development is to be a functional part of the Army's training and leader development model, then incentives are needed to encourage individuals to pursue the

educational goals the Army, as an institution, feels are important for the good of the organization.

Institutional

Achieving what FM 7-0 and Joint publications describe as requirements for future training - a force fully trained on Insurgency and General War tasks and whose leaders are adaptable - can be achieved only if Soldiers and Leaders are fully trained in full spectrum operations while at the institution during their initial training courses. This requires Soldiers and Leaders to be technically and tactically proficient in their branch core skills for offensive and defensive operations and in the fundamentals of stability operations, and they must be given opportunities to develop critical thinking and adaptability skills. Research done by Mr. Tillison and his team found that: "Critical thinking skills are a set of cognitive skills that are developed over time given the appropriate educational experiences *and practice*."³³ (emphasis added) Such training lays a foundation from which unit commanders and individuals can progress in subsequent training and education opportunities at the unit, through the institution, and by individual study. Bringing students to proficiency in these tasks will take more time than is currently permitted in the institutions.

TRADOC guidance restricts institutional course lengths in order to speed new Soldiers and Leaders through the training base and on to operational units to meet deployment timelines. This policy prevents Soldiers and Leaders from being adequately trained to achieve the FM 7-0 goal. In the case of the Field Artillery, pre-Iraqi Freedom course lengths were adequate to make Soldiers and Leaders competent in branch core tasks before Insurgency tasks were added. Today, given the increase in mission

requirements without a corresponding increase in course lengths to train and educate, it is reasonable to assume that Soldiers and Leaders graduating from the Field Artillery School do so having had fewer opportunities to practice and ingrain branch core tasks – leading to the potential of a faster loss of these skills once in the operational force and exacerbating the issues unit commanders have when trying to reestablish core competencies.

Subsequent educational opportunities for leader education (Captain Career Course, BNCOC and ANCOC) are under scrutiny to be reduced or modified – thus further challenging the need to re-establish core branch skills. As mentioned earlier, select BNCOC resident courses for operationally assigned NCOs are being replaced by MTTs on an “as needed basis” traveling to units that do not have the luxury of sending NCOs to eight weeks of professional education. It is too early to analyze the long term impact on the NCO Corps of a six week reduction in education at critical times in an NCO’s career, especially in BNCOC, which is targeted to reinforce core skills at the Staff Sergeant level.

Assuming that the current operational tempo will not be reduced, and assuming that the current attitude prevails restricting institutional course lengths, institutions must determine those tasks that must be trained at the institution with the limited time available to provide a foundation of core competencies and then provide a means of continuing the education of Soldiers and Leaders so that they can learn what the institution did not have time to train.

Exploring a Potential Solution

Providing a means to train the force in all aspects of full spectrum operations will require a paradigm shift in the way the Army views and executes training. First, the Army must change its cultural attitude toward training and education. TRADOC's imposition of limitations to course lengths is an indication of the Army's attitude of operations over training and education. The United States Marine Corps, as an institution, is determined to ensure its force is educated, trained, and adaptable and makes tangible efforts keep this ethos.³⁴ USMC policy ensures training/educational institutions are resourced with instructors and cadre (95% fill) to provide the education and training necessary,³⁵ and course lengths have not been reduced even during this period of high operational tempo. Second, as the Army changes its attitude toward training and education, unit commanders must actively encourage and support Soldiers and Leaders pursuing self study opportunities. Only through chain of command involvement will the Army change its educational paradigm and become a learning organization. Operational tempo is challenging institutional resident courses as being the only way to train the force. Third, Noncommissioned Officer education must be held at the same level of importance as Officer or Warrant Officer education.

Noncommissioned Officers need time to reflect and learn; participating in professional discussions with their contemporaries. Because they are the Army's backbone, NCOs have professional education needs similar to officer requirements. Fourth, the institution will continue to be the basis from which training and education will originate, but the means by which the institution accomplishes this mission will change.

Advances in digital communications technologies have revolutionized the way information is shared and the way education is conducted. Colleges and universities (including the Army War College) are leveraging this technology to reach out to students with increasing opportunities for advanced and continuing education. Army Knowledge Online, branch knowledge networks, blogging, forums, and Direct Connect Online are examples of how the Army is embracing technology and how information is being shared. These techniques can help provide the means to expand educational opportunities. Institutions are making efforts to share instructional material with the field through Army Knowledge Online and Knowledge Networks, and TRADOC is exploring the potential of using Virtual Environments to enhance educational and life-long learning opportunities. These technological advances possess enormous potential to expand educational opportunities for Soldiers, Leaders, and units and can provide an avenue for branch institutions to project instructional materials on branch core competencies and emerging new tasks.

In recent years, TRADOC emphasized the use of distributed learning courses, or dL, as a way to reduce the amount of time Soldiers and Leaders spend in the institution. Courses presented via distributed learning products became prerequisites for attendance of resident courses. As the emphasis on reducing resident course lengths continues, this methodology will prove to be a means of providing continuing education to Army Soldiers and Leaders and has potential for improvement and expansion. This method comes at a price to the individual, however. While the Soldier taking the course remains at home station with his operational unit and family, he/she takes the course during non-duty hours. In some instances course material may equate to 270 hours of

work.³⁶ Therefore the individual is a full time student, a full time member of his/her unit ,and must maintain family responsibilities. Such requirements may send the wrong message to Leaders and serve as a “dis-incentive” for pursuing self-development. However, using distributed teaching methods and rearranging priorities in operational units may provide an alternative.

As officers and NCOs matriculate they reach key ranks and positions that require a change in perspective, focus, and thought. Institutions and commanders must be prepared to provide training opportunities to meet Leader educational needs. Future education opportunities should include a mixture of resident and non-resident courses leveraging advances in technology and education: using a blended approach of material presentation to students. Linking institutional instructional capabilities with the Internet and synchronous/ asynchronous education delivery methods would provide a means of reaching Soldiers and Leaders in the field for professional military education with less reliance on resident courses or expensive MTTs to build on the foundation laid during initial training at the institutions. This is not to say that there is not a place for resident instruction. Resident courses would be attended by Leaders assigned to non-operational unit billets or who are in transition between units. Leaders in operational units may not be able to attend lengthy resident courses, but may be able to do so if courses were presented with both distributed and resident phases: the resident phase being of fairly short duration.

Courses for Leaders at this stage in their careers must provide a means to teach critical thinking, cognitive processes, and adaptability in addition to the application of core competencies for the branch and insurgency operations at higher levels. In a

recent study sponsored by the US Air Force Education and Training Command, the Institute For Advanced Technology at the University of Texas proposed using a blended approach in training and education: an approach that potentially reduces resident training time while leveraging technology to enhance distributed training effectiveness. This approach used a combination of resident and distributed (on-line) training.³⁷ The non-resident phase would leverage simulations to enable “team-based collaboration to solve authentic problems”³⁸ faced by Leaders of the same rank. On-line information also provides interactive learning modules for material best suited for such delivery. This reduces the time needed in resident phase instruction but allows for student learning and collaboration. The study recommended that on-line instruction “be embedded with robust collaboration environments that promote team-based activities along with peer-based and student/instructor discussions.”³⁹ Resident instruction would focus on relationship building through practical exercises reinforcing the material learned in through distributed learning. This recommendation merits further exploration by Army institutions.

To achieve an adaptive and potentially proactive leader, students must be put in constantly changing situations and receive immediate feedback from a mentor. A key aspect of building adaptive and, potentially proactive Leaders, requires regular interaction with a mentor/instructor. Synchronous teaching techniques via the Internet could be used by Army institutions to provide this function. Such a system requires an instructional staff that can interact with students regularly, change teaching scenarios, facilitate discussions, give feedback, add ambiguity, uncertainty, and stress to lessons,

and provide repeated opportunities to practice the application of branch unique and leadership skills in ever changing situations.

Operational unit Leaders/students enrolling in a course through the Army Training and Requirements and Resources System (ATRRS) by either Human Resource Command (HRC) or the unit's schools NCO (after unit commanders are informed) would begin this educational process. Leaders/students would receive orders to attend the prescribed class at their home station (i.e. at the local education center or computer lab, even at home, taking the course via the Internet) during duty hours. These courses would leverage advances in technology like Adobe Connect and Blackboard to allow collaboration with an assigned mentor, and idea sharing with peers from disparate locations and backgrounds. Out of necessity, these courses would be of shorter duration than resident courses and would consist of a series of instructional "modules" that, when completed and linked together over time, give the same instruction as longer resident courses (i.e. Captains Career Course, Noncommissioned Officers Advance Course). Once enrolled, students would be given a prescribed amount of time (three years for example) to complete all the modules of the course, thus giving flexibility to unit commanders and individuals to meet unit operational and individual educational needs.

Educational maps, designed for each grade and MOS, outlining the training 'gates' to be met for advancement, and MOS/grade proficiency would provide timelines and requirements for both the unit commander and the student so that needed courses could be predicted and meshed with unit Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) and deployment timelines. In addition to prescribed courses, institutions would provide self-

development materials for Soldiers to access when needed. Materials could range from refresher training on MOS skills to learning new skills required for an upcoming job transfer or reassignment.

This strategy allows for the educational benefits presented by collaboration with peers who have different experiences and can broaden each other's perspective. It leverages experienced faculty that can facilitate learning the full range of subject materials of branch core competencies and full spectrum operations while mentoring and developing future senior Leaders. It provides students the dedicated time during duty hours to focus on education and learning for the next higher assignment or areas of responsibility. And it provides a means to educate Leaders unable to depart units due to operational demands more comprehensively than short duration resident of MTT courses.

This strategy can only be successful if the chain of command at every level accepts and enforces this construct and resources its requirements. Students assigned to distributed classes must be treated as if they were attending a resident course. In other words, unit commanders must allow students the time to focus on course materials during duty hours and not permit unit requirements to draw them away. Training institutions must embrace the idea of mentorship, intelligent tutoring, and distributed education using faculty members to guide and facilitate learning. TRADOC and the Army must resource the additional faculty and technology upgrades needed to make this suggestion feasible.

In the long term, a more adaptive approach toward resident and non-resident training (with no discrimination for those who complete a course non-resident),

combined with a blended approach to course presentation using the technological means available today for distributed education will begin the process of making the Army a learning institution. Online forums, blogging, and communities of practice – all available through AKO presently – provide immediate means for individuals to share information with peers and improve learning. Unit commanders are the key to success and must set the tone.

Few are the times when the United States has fought a major competitor in force on force applications compared to the number of times that US forces have conducted counterinsurgency, peacemaking, or peace keeping operations. Assuming that a mixture of warfare types will be the norm in the future, Army units must be able to rapidly respond to whatever battle demands – from Stable Peace to General War – in a moment. Leaders must become more adaptable in order to recognize and respond to shifting conflict, and training institutions have to be organized and prepared to educate the force. With these changes, the Army will be better prepared to meet the educational and combat demands of the today and in the future.

Endnotes

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